

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-11 (canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A method of selecting, for a first block of a first image based on an array of pixels, a similar block of a second image based on said array of pixels, the method including:

- (i) defining a reference pixel in said array;
- (ii) deriving at least one threshold value based on a previously-derived mismatch value for at least one further block of the first image;
- (iii) defining a plurality of search zones in said array, labelled by integer index i , said zones surrounding said reference pixel and having a radius which increases for increasing i ;
- (iv) after step (ii), for successive zones, and for successive pixels in each zone, determining a block of the second image based on each [said] successive pixel of said successive pixels, and determining a mismatch value between said first block of the first image and said determined block based on a mismatch criterion; and
- (v) selecting said similar block of the second image as the determined block for which said determined mismatch is lowest;

wherein step (iv) is terminated upon at least one termination criterion being satisfied, said termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value based on a previously-derived mismatch value.

13. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 12 in which in step (ii) said at least one further block of the first image is adjacent said first block of the first image.

Claim 14 (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A method of selecting, for a first block of a first image based on an array of pixels, a similar block of a second image based on said array of pixels, the method including:

- (i) defining a reference pixel in said array;
- (ii) deriving at least one threshold value based on a mismatch value of a second block of the first image adjacent said first block;
- (iii) defining a plurality of search zones in said array, labelled by integer index i , said zones surrounding said reference pixel and having a radius which increases for increasing i ;
- (iv) after step (ii), for successive zones, and for successive pixels in each zone, determining a block of the second image based on each [said] successive pixel of said successive pixels, and determining a mismatch value between said first block of the first image and said determined block based on a mismatch criterion; and
- (v) selecting said similar block of the second image as the determined block for which said determined mismatch is lowest;

wherein step (iv) is terminated upon at least one termination criterion being satisfied, said termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value based on a previously-derived mismatch value.

Claims 16-23 (Canceled)

24. (Previously Presented) A method of encoding a first image which includes defining successive blocks of the first image, and for each block of the first image:
selecting the similar block of a second image by a method according to claim 12; and
encoding the block of the first image as data specifying the similar block of the second image, and the data specifying differences between the block of the first image and the similar block of the second image.

Claim 25 (Canceled)

26. (Previously Presented) A method of encoding a first image which includes defining successive blocks of the first image, and for each block of the first image:
selecting the similar block of a second image by a method according to claim 15; and
encoding the block of the first image as data specifying the similar block of the second image, and the data specifying differences between the block of the first image and the similar block of the second image.

Claims 27-34 (Canceled)

35. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium storing computer-executable program code for performing a method according to claim 12, whereby execution of the code by a processor causes the processor to select the similar block of the second image.

Claim 36 (Canceled)

37. (Previously Presented) A computer-readable medium storing computer-executable program code for performing a method according to claim 15, whereby execution of the code by a processor causes the processor to select the similar block of the second image.

Claim 38 (Canceled)

39. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 15 in which in step (i) said reference point is defined based on an estimated motion vector associated with said first block.

40. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 15 in which prior to step (iii) a step is performed of deriving a zone number M, and in step (iii) the number of said successive zone is M.

41. (New) A method according to claim 12 in which step (ii) further comprises using previously-derived motion vector values of two or more further blocks of the first image adjacent said first block to derive a further termination value, wherein step (iv) is terminated when either of the following conditions is met:

- (1) at least one termination criterion being satisfied, said termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value based on a previously-derived mismatch value; or
- 2) at least one further termination criterion is satisfied, said further criterion being defined in terms of said further termination value.

42. (New) A method according to claim 41 in which the further termination value is an integer value, and said further termination criterion is satisfied when said mismatch value has been determined for each successive pixel in a number of successive zones equal to said derived integer value.

43. (New) A method of selecting, for a first block of a first image based on an array of pixels, a similar block of a second image based on said array of pixels, the method including:

- (i) defining a reference pixel in said array;
- (ii) deriving at least one threshold value based on a mismatch value of a second block of the first image adjacent said first block and deriving at least one further threshold value using a previously-derived mismatch value of a block of a third image corresponding in position to said first block of the first image;

- (iii) defining a plurality of search zones in said array, labeled by integer index i , said zones surrounding said reference pixel and having a radius which increases for increasing i;
- (iv) after step (ii), for successive zones, and for successive pixels in each zone, determining a block of the second image based on each successive pixel of said successive pixels, and determining a mismatch value between said first block of the first image and said determined block based on a mismatch criterion; and
- (v) selecting said similar block of the second image as the determined block for which said determined mismatch is lowest;

wherein step (iv) is terminated upon any of a plurality of one termination criteria being satisfied, at least one said termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said threshold value and at least one said termination criterion being defined in terms of a respective said further threshold value.

44. (New) A method according to claim 43 in which the third image is equivalent to a predecessor of the first image.

45. (New) A method of encoding a first image which includes defining successive blocks of the first image, and for each block of the first image:

selecting the similar block of a second image by a method according to claim 43; and

encoding the block of the first image as data specifying the similar block of the second image, and the data specifying differences between the block of the first image and the similar block of the second image.

46. (New) A computer-readable medium storing computer-executable program code for performing a method according to claim 43, whereby execution of the code by a processor causes the processor to select the similar block of the second image.